

C O N F I D E N T I A L

11 February 1986

NOTE FOR: Director, Office of Congressional Affairs

FROM:

  
Special Support Assistant to the DDA

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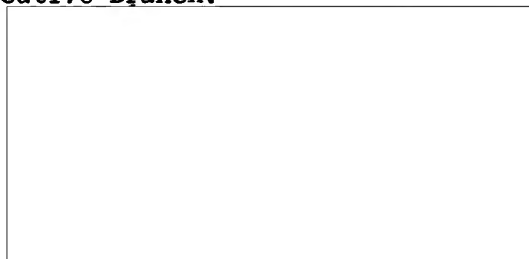
SUBJECT: Questions Devised by AFSA

1. Thought you would like to take a look at the variety of questions which had been devised by the AFSA - State Department "Union" - to be put to Ambassador Spiers.

2. The second attachment are talking papers for the liaison people when they deal with the Congress and the Executive Branch.

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Attachment:  
As stated



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C O N F I D E N T I A L

### Sample Questions

- 1.) In a Gramm-Rudman world how can the Department justify increasing its manpower costs by each year forcing into retirement 100 to 150 mid-career and senior officers who will be paid 50 to 60% of their salaries for doing nothing and be replaced by other officers who will earn nearly as much as the officers they are replacing?
- 2.) You have frequently been quoted as being unhappy with the growth of the size of the senior service. How do you square these concerns with the fact that the senior service has been declining steadily since 1967 and is now about 200 officers lower than it was in that year?
- 3.) How can the Foreign Service expect to continue developing the area and functional expertise it needs if it continues to be so difficult for specialists in these area to make it over the senior threshold?
- 4.) In the past our rank-in-officer personnel system has permitted us to retain and continue to challenge our best and brightest better than other bureaucracies by giving them stretch assignments which, if they performed them well, brought quick promotions. As we move closer to a "civil servicized" system with a virtual rank-in-position system, how are we going to be able to continue getting the most out of or even retaining our best and brightest?
- 5.) Why should we allow others to compare our officer rank structure to the military or Civil Service and find us over-ranked? Why not compare us to a law firm which usually has a large share of senior partners? If we have to be compared to the Civil Service and the military why not to the rank structure of those GS officers who entered under their management intern programs or those officers who were graduates of West Point of the Naval or Air Force academies?
- 6.) If we continue with the heavy emphasis on job classification and rank in position how will we avoid the Civil Service consequences of such policies i.e. greatly increased staffs and very rigid personnel systems?
- 7.) Is there not a "self-fulfilling prophesy" dimension to the Department's current personnel policies? With over 70% of the officers knowing they will have no FSO career beyond roughly 51 or 52 years of age what sort of self esteem and commitment to the Service are they likely to have? Are not some of the depressed, poor-performing Junior and mid-career officers the result of the Department's own personnel policies?
- 8.) What is the correct size of the Senior Foreign Service relative to the rest of the Service? 10%, 5%, 3%?

- 9.) Do you think that a personnel system which puts roughly two-thirds its Seniors and Senior Ols within 2-3 years of a termination of career undercuts the willingness of those officers to challenge the status quo whatever it may be?
- 10.) What success have FSO's had moving on to second careers at 50 years of age?
- 11.) A fairly careful reading of the 1980 Foreign Service Act and the hearings leading up to it would indicate that Congress had a very limited agenda of its own in passing the Act and was seeking mainly to respond to the wishes of the Department. How can we now claim that our personnel policies are imposed by Congress?
- 12.) The 1980 Act gives the Department's managers a number of new powers but it does not prescribe how they shall be used. Are not the particular policies now being followed the Department's design and not that of Congress?
- 13.) Are you concerned that, with a personnel system in which 70-75% of officers will have to find new careers at somewhat over 50 years of age, officers will begin to devote more time to preparing for or finding second careers than to doing their current jobs?

Talking Points for calls  
on Congress and  
Executive Branch  
Officials

1). We are calling on you because the Department management is greatly undercutting the Foreign Service's ability to carry out U.S. foreign policy, and says it is required to do this because of pressure from Congress and other executive branch agencies.

2). By implementing the 1980 Foreign Service Act so that 9 out of 10 Foreign Services officers (FSO's) will be forced into involuntary retirement in their mid 50's, the Department is: A.) discouraging substantive and area specialization, B.) encouraging conformism and C.) substantially increasing the Department's personnel costs in an era of severe budgetary constraint.

3). To be retained under the current system, officers have to demonstrate that they are more managers than area or functional experts. Experts on single countries with difficult languages such as Japan, China and the Soviet Union are especially disadvantaged under this system. Two Japanese language officers a year are being forcibly retired at around 50 years of age while there were no senior Japanese language officers to take the posts of economic and political

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chiefs in our embassy in Tokyo or to become Director of the Japanese affairs office in the Department. The chief of our political section in Beijing has been forcibly retired by this system. Moreover, the availability of Soviet experts at the higher levels of the Department has been cut back sharply since they have few chances to show that they are managers. On the functional side, FSO's cannot survive as experts on narcotics, science and technology, refugees, foreign trade and international finance or most other specializations. They are abandoning these fields to the detriment of the Department's ability to handle its growing responsibilities in these areas.

4.) Roughly three quarters of higher mid level and Senior Officers are within 3 years of personnel system thresholds at which they can be forced into retirement. This creates an atmosphere of uncertainty. since a single less-than-enthusiastic annual performance evaluation by their superior will almost assure the end of these officers's career.

5.) The Department is paying two officers to do the job of one. By forcing out officers in their early 50's the Department is substantially increasing its personnel costs, though not in a way which is immediately apparent to analysts of its budget. The officers being forced out would not have had to retire for another 10 to 15 years. Therefore, the retirement pay which they receive for doing

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nothing during the 10 to 15 years they would have preferred being on active duty should be counted as part of the Department's personnel costs, since those replacing these retirees are paid full salaries. This forced retirement program has been in effect for three years and about 10% has been added to the Department's FSO personnel costs. This percentage will increase about two to three points a year for roughly the next 10 years.

6.) These forcibly retired officers are not being selected out for substandard performance, but rather to achieve some mysterious personnel objective called "flow through". Even though this "flow through" is supposed to benefit the service's younger officers, they apparently do not see it as an advantage. Over the past three years lower ranking officers have been resigning at two to three times the average rate they were doing so during the 10 years prior to the 1980 Act. Apparently, our younger officers see only illusory gain in moving ahead rapidly now only to be forced to seek second careers in their 50's.

7.) The Foreign Service has long taken pride in its separate personnel system with its selection out process. This system has permitted the Service to handle the rapid increase in international activity over the past 30 years with no increase in our 4,000 officer corps, and with a sharp reduction in our senior officer contingent.

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Our process of selecting out officers for poor performance has helped maintain our competitiveness and effectiveness. We oppose, however, the Department's current policy of forced career ending, which is doing so much damage to our effectiveness.

8.) We ask your help to convince the Department's senior officials to reverse these damaging policies. Otherwise, the ability of the Service to effectively carry out this country's foreign policy will be severely eroded.

9.) Attached are some questions you might wish to ask of Senior Department officials.

A. Why, in tight budgetary times, is the Department forcing so many high level officers into retirement? These involuntarily retired officers will be paid an annuity of 50 to 60% of their salaries for doing nothing and new, fully paid officers will be put into their places.

B. As important as management skills are, how can the Department continue personnel policies which discourage the development of area and functional specializations which are essential to meeting our important foreign policy objectives?

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C. How can you expect your more senior officers to provide the candid analysis and judgment you need if two thirds of them would be forced out of the Service within three years by one less-than-enthusiastic efficiency report?